

Substance Use Prevention Priorities for Youth



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Behavioral Health



Epidemiology Workgroup

Missouri youth struggle with a variety of challenges as they move towards healthy adulthood; academics, relationships with friends and family and positive behavioral choices. Substance use is a major challenge when it comes to behavioral health; over 5,000 youth died of drug overdose in 2017. This brief presents information on some of the more problematic substances that Missouri prevention is working to address.

Alcohol



Excessive drinking is responsible for more than 4,300 deaths among underage youth each year.³ Approximately 35% of Missouri youth have used alcohol at least once during their lifetime, higher than the national rate of 27%.^{1,2} Rates of past-month use in Missouri are also higher than the national rate, 14.5% and 9.5% respectively.^{1,2} Nearly 40% of students who report past month alcohol use also report binge drinking, or having 5 or more drinks on the same occasion.¹

Prescription Drug Misuse



In 2017, 1,031 young people ages 15-24 died from prescription drug misuse in the United States.⁴ 8% of Missouri youth report misusing prescription drugs over the past 30 days and 11% of youth report having misused prescription drugs at least once.¹ The most common type of medication used was pain medication (48%); similarly, the most common reason for drug misuse was to reduce or manage pain (28%).¹ Most youth reported accessing prescription drugs through a family member giving or selling it to them (43%).¹

Electronic Cigarettes



Recently, 26 patients have died (one in Missouri) and nearly 1,300 lung injury cases associated with e-cigarette use have been reported;⁶ Approximately 80% of patients are under the age of 35, including 36% under the age of 20.⁶ In Missouri, approximately 15% of youth have used an e-cigarette in the past 30 days.¹ Most Missouri students report using flavor-only liquid in their e-cigarettes; however, over 40% use nicotine and 11% use marijuana.¹

Marijuana



Research has shown that marijuana use during the teenage years can negatively affect school performance and have permanent effects on brain development.⁵ Approximately 6.5% of Missouri youth have used marijuana in the past 30 days. 14% of youth have used marijuana at least once in their lifetime; these rates are similar to the national rates. The vast majority of youth reported obtaining their marijuana from a friend (75%) or from a dealer (43%).

1. Missouri Student Survey, 2018.
2. National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2016-2017.
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018. Underage Drinking Fact Sheet.
4. National Institute on Drug Abuse for Teens, 2019. Drug Overdoses in Youth.
5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2017. What You Need to Know About Marijuana Use in Teens.
6. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019. Outbreak of Lung Injury Associated with E-Cigarette Use, or Vaping.